

REMARKS

The specification has been reviewed, and clerical errors of the specification have been amended.

In amended Figs. 1 and 3-6, spellings of "Knead-extruding" and "Baked" have been corrected.

In paragraph 1 of the Action, claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-3, 5, and 6 have been canceled, and claim 4 has been amended to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention.

In paragraph 4 of the Action, claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okayama in view of Fujita et al., Alexander et al. and applicant's admission of prior art.

In view of the rejections, claims 1-3, 5 and 6 have been canceled. Claim 4 has been amended to include additional limitations and incorporate the subject matter of cancelled claims 5 and 6 to obviate the rejection. Claims 7 and 8 have been amended to depend from amended claim 4. Also, new claims 9-12 depending from amended claim 4 have been filed.

As clearly cited in claim 4, a method for manufacturing a soft-baked rice cracker includes the steps of: steam-kneading a mixture of rice powder and water; conducting a first drying step for drying the mixture of the rice powder and the water; conducting a second drying step for drying the mixture of the rice powder and water; producing a baked dough of the soft-baked rice cracker having a specific volume of 5.0 to 6.5 cm³/g; coating a surface of the baked dough with oil; and applying emulsified sauce having a viscosity of 50 to 800 cp onto the surface of the baked dough coated with the oil.

In particular, the mixture of rice powder and water is steam-kneaded, and then dried in the two separate drying steps, namely the first drying step and the second drying step. Due to these steps, it is possible to produce the baked dough of the soft-baked rice cracker having a specific volume of 5.0 to 6.5 cm³/g. Further, the surface of the baked dough is coated with the oil first, and then the emulsified sauce having a viscosity of 50 to 800 cp is applied onto the surface of the baked dough coated with the oil to obtain a specific flavor.

Okayama cited in the Action relates to a method for producing a rice cookie. The method includes making a dough which comprises glutinous or regular rice flour as the main ingredient, mixed with about half of the flour's weight in oil or fat, sweetener, and egg white. While these materials are being mixed, liquids containing milk products, 35-45% in total weight of the materials, are added to make the dough. The dough then baked in an oven. During the baking process, steam is allowed to escape. Further, in Okayama, it is disclosed that the rice cookie has a soft texture and a variety of flavorings such as soy sauce can be coated on the rice cookie.

In the invention, the mixture of rice powder and water is steam-kneaded. The mixture is then dried in the first drying step and the second drying step before baking. As a result, the baked dough of the soft-baked rice cracker has a specific volume of 5.0 to 6.5 cm³/g. In Okayama, there are no such processes as the steam-kneading, the first drying and the second drying in the method for producing the rice cookie. Also, a specific range of the specific volume of the baked dough has not been disclosed.

Further, in the invention, the oil is coated on the surface of the backed dough before applying the emulsified sauce. In Okayama, there are no steps of separately applying the oil and the emulsified sauce.

Therefore, Okayama does not disclose or suggest the features of claim 4.

Fujita et al. relates to a process of emulsifying a fat or oil into an aqueous phase containing soy sauce. The process includes adding glycerol phospholipid as an emulsifier to a mixture of the fat or oil and the aqueous phase containing soy sauce. According to Fujita et al., the method provides a stable emulsified sauce for adding a flavor to food or improving the properties thereof as opposed to conventional processes that require soy sauce and oil are applied separately.

In the invention, the surface of the baked dough is coated twice in a particular order, namely first coated with the oil, and then the emulsified sauce is applied to the surface to obtain the benefit. Fujita et al. does not disclose or suggest that the oil

and the emulsified sauce are applied separately in the particular order as in the invention.

Therefore, Fujita et al. do not disclose or suggest the features of claim 4.

Alexander et al. relates to a method of making a snack product. The method includes the steps of introducing into a cooking extruder a base and sufficient moisture to form an extrudable dough base; cooking the dough base in the cooking extruder; extruding the dough base from the cooking extruder to form a wet product; drying the wet product to reduce its moisture content, coating the dry product with an oil slurry; and topically applying the coated dry product with a flavor premix. According to Alexander et al., a food product is coated with the oil slurry for providing a specific mouth feel, helping a flavor to adhere and improving the shelf life of the product. The flavor premix may be a powder and dusted onto the oil coated dry puffs.

In the invention, the mixture of rice powder and water is steam-kneaded. The mixture is then dried in the first drying step and the second drying step before baking. As a result, the baked dough of the soft-baked rice cracker has a specific volume of 5.0 to 6.5 cm³/g. In Alexander et al., the base with sufficient moisture is cooked in the cooking extruder to form the wet product. The wet product is then dried to reduce its moisture content. There are no such processes as the steam-kneading, the first drying and the second drying in Alexander. Also, no specific range of the specific volume of the baked dough is disclosed.

In the invention, the oil is coated on the surface of the backed dough before applying the emulsified sauce. In Alexander, the dry product is coated with the oil slurry, and then the flavor premix including supplemental fiber is applied. Alexander does not disclose or suggest the usage of the aqueous emulsified sauce as the flavor.

Therefore, Alexander et al. do not disclose or suggest the combination of the features of claim 4.

In the application, it is stated that oil may be coated for enhancing the gloss of the product. However, if oil is simply coated onto the baked product, the emulsified sauce later applied may not be equally provided onto the entire surface of the baked

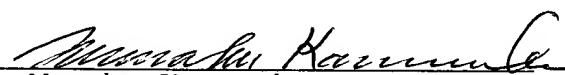
product, as explained on page 7, lines 8-22 of the specification. Therefore, although oil is known to be applied to the baked product, oil and emulsified sauce can not be simply applied to the product. The characteristics of the baked dough and emulsified sauce are also very important. The prior art does not disclose or suggest the specific combination of oil with other ingredients.

As explained above, the features of claim 4 are not disclosed or suggested in the cited references. Even if the cited references are combined, claim 4 is not obvious from the cited references.

Reconsideration and allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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